



Soft Skill Appraisal for Dentistry: A Tool for Positive Practice Management

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills adoption is a learning experience for every practitioner and every academician. Author has expressed his opinion for success through educational and real values of soft skill. Soft skills behavior of individual and institution help in achieving desirable goals in general and specialty practices. Author also focused on some realistic soft skill methods for improvisation of practices for all doctor.

Conclusion: These skills indulge positive energy in human relationship for working in symbiosis and explore infinite capabilities at institutional and doctoral level. Here, some optimistic suggestions are given for improving dental practices and academic fulfillments.

Clinical significance: These soft skills help to organize, plan and manage, and track changes during the course of the growing dental practices. However, understanding of the soft skills in practice management, its simplicity and complexity and also, its contributing factors, helps practitioners to understand the dynamic, social and complex contexts of practices. It is really helpful to all practitioners to grow their practices using soft skills.

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INTRODUCTION

When the dentist is working in his own clinic or any institution, he should know what exactly he desires to achieve. What is his golden goal? Whether he wants to become a good clinician or truly hardcore academician? Or both? And ahead this, what is his pure attention for progressive development for his target? The answer for achieving this is attaining and developing soft skills.

Soft skills is a sociological term relating to a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that characterize relationships with the patients.¹ Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a dentists job and many other activities. In dental practices, no body taught these skills for overall growth of all practitioners, so it's time to highlight them for betterment.

Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects in the life of a dentist. Unlike hard skills, which are about a person's skill set and ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable.

A dentist's soft skill EQ is an important part of their individual contribution to the success of their practices. Particularly smart practitioners dealing with patients face-to-face are generally more successful, if they train their staff to use these skills. Screening or training for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for their clinics. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by dentists in addition to standard qualifications.²

Soft skills are self-promoted, nontechnical and very important views of that person, within his work environment. For budding or upcoming dentist, he should develop soft skills related with his practices; positive emotional build blocks in inner self. He should develop soft skills with his/her staff and the patients. Following are the soft skills, required for victorious success in life of the dentist.

1. Positive behavior with the patient and the staff.
2. Interinstitutional and interpersonal hard work for betterment.

3. Egoless desirability to learn and ability to take new responsibilities.
4. His/her stand and opinion for individual and institutional growth.
5. Capabilities for influencing people and executing decision for benefit. Soft skills also throw light on the abilities of dentist like analytical thinking for diagnosis, cautiousness, his inner leadership behavior, flexibility and ability to accept newer changes in unfavorable scenario, his diplomacy and ability to solve the problems. Most of the people think that soft skills are people skills or emotional intelligence. In reality, a hard skill in dentistry means technical ability or hard work for the best. In a competitive world of dentistry, hard skills are initially necessary, but to prove you, soft skills are mandatory. Soft skills play a vital role for professional success; they help one to excel in the workplace and their importance cannot be denied in this age of information and knowledge. Good soft skills, which are in fact scarce, in the highly competitive practicing world, will help you stand out in a milieu of routine job seekers with mediocre skills and talent.

When dentist develops these soft skills like a learning child, his progress in his specialty is fabulous at individual and institutional level. He can get more opportunities and more respect, and obviously more money. Here some positive suggestions are given for improving these skills, like:

1. Going for practice management workshops.
2. Sending staff for personality development workshops.
3. Showing positive and negative sides to staff, to improve positive soft skills.
4. Leadership development program for staff and dentist.
5. Giving rewards with cheer-up for network building and collaboration.
6. Showing instructional material like DVDS, live seminars for patients and staff.
7. Giving opportunity to staff, to think newer and express their positive attitude for building practices.
8. Oration skill development program for maturing self-confidence.
9. Mixing and adjusting with all type of people.
10. Daring for negotiation and beneficial investments.
11. Meditation way to improve life force energy and to improve absolute balance in present.
12. Optimistic motivation.

The diagram shows assessment of soft skills (Fig. 1).³

We should understand that, soft skills help in improving personal management skills⁴ in life of aspiring people for

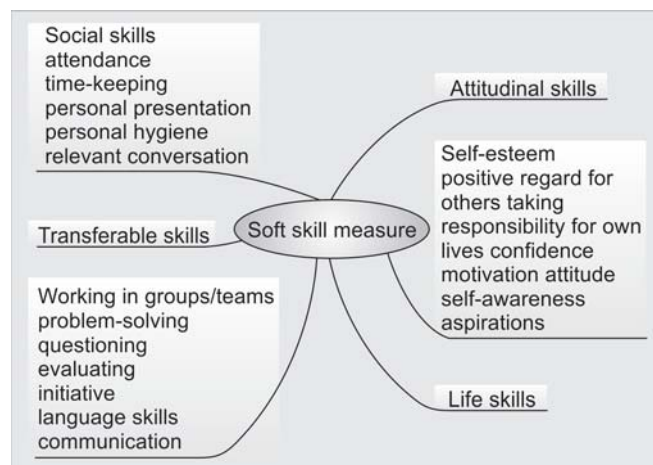


Fig. 1: Assessment of soft skills

success. These skills help to improve our practical life awesome. These are:^{4,5}

Time Management and Planning Skills

Having time management skills is simply having the ability to recognize and solve time management problems in dental practices or in academics. It is as the old age says, 'to never put off for later what can be done right now.' You can develop this personal management skill by keeping a calendar and beginning to schedule everything. You heard right, everything. This includes scheduling your free time and the time it takes to get from one meeting to another.⁶

Financial Management Skills

Perfection in designing successful practices comes from effective financial management at individual level and in collaboration.⁹

You can perfect your financial management skills by trying a few of the following:

- Create a budget and tailor your spending to meet its requirements.
- Save every receipt from every purchase that you make in 1 month and find out how much money you are really spending. You might be surprised to find out where your money is actually going.
- Create income and expense reports that allow you to see the bigger picture of your financial situation.^{7,8}
- Manage your personal and institutional finances.

When you are on the road to successfully managing your financial situation, you are growing exponentially toward becoming awesome.

When you are able to manage growing finances along with soft skills implementation, dynamism in personality explores pathways of success in practicing dentistry.^{10,11}

Communication Skills

A few tricks to improving your communication skills are:

- Practice active listening. Try to look at the person who is speaking in the eyes and think only about the words that he/she is speaking.
- Speak slowly and ask questions to test whether the listening party (for example, patient) understands what is being communicated.
- When writing, always write a first draft and edit the draft into a final copy after asking whether the purpose of your communication for treatment is clear and understandable.
- When you find yourself caught up in your own thoughts, try to relax and 'Watch' the thinker thinking those thoughts. You are not your thoughts. You are greater than your thinking.^{12,13,14}
- Every practicing individual should adhere to the basics of the law and regulation in communication with the others in positive soft skill manner.¹⁵

Organization Skills

Personal management would be incomplete without the ability to stay organized. We cannot accomplish any goals without the resources required to get the job done.^{16,17}

Organization of soft skills should complete the patients concerns regarding evidence-based practicing dentistry for effective management of communal dental health.^{18,19}

Leadership behavior at excellence must be coined by organizing both of your hard and soft skills.^{20,21}

Continued Self-development Skills

This is the most important personal management skill of them all. Without the ability to continue moving forward with personal development you will be unable to recognize the areas that need to be corrected in order to increase your time, financial, communication and organization skills. Without continued self-development, your personal management skills will falter and the awesome person that you are will fail to reach its full potential.

A few ways to increase your continued self-development skills are:^{5,6}

- Schedule a weekly appointment with yourself in order to evaluate your progress and your setbacks
- Spend time each morning focusing on what it is you are going to accomplish for the day
- Review your day at its closing and accept the areas that need work and praise yourself for the day's victories
- Remain open-minded and flexible. Remember, change is inevitable

- Create goals and long-term objectives
- No matter what, continue moving forward. Soft skills are an inner thoughts positive weapon, which change and promise everything in reality in any atmosphere for self and institutional benefits. When any specialist like orthodontist, periodontist or anybody acquires these skills their practices nourish and flourish in every direction. Because success really starts-first in inner mind, then recognizes the outer world with its limitless victories.^{22,23}

In the global scenario of dentistry, both at rural and urban level, both general dentist and the specialist are struggling to show and earn best. For them, both hard and soft skills are necessary but definitely, soft skills are those skills which dictate success at perception level. Positive practice management can be possible with effective learning and acquiring soft skills, for bright dental practices.

Dental office management must be synchronized with effective basic foundation of clinical and personal success so that inclining growth is sure in every aspect of practices. Practice skills concerns with patients as a central core and dental team as 'overall caring' for the core.^{24,25} Ethical norms must be followed given by the laws and regulatory authorities in respective countries beneficial for community dental health of the world. Patients concerns should be prioritize for his benefit, in public health program by implementing soft skills in the community dental practices. All governing partners for health and NGOs should consider soft skills as a motivational tool for promotion of dental health and growth of dentistry. Soft skills implies growth of leadership domain in positive.

Practice management, which will again give motivation to specialty and general practices. Soft skills facilitate pilot learning for perfection and growth of leadership implementation in newly developing dental practices. Results oriented practice goals can be managed with realistic and feasible, patients' expectation for qualitative oral health care of the community in soft skills application.²⁶

CONCLUSION

These soft skills help to organize, plan and manage, and track changes during the course of the growing dental practices. However, understanding of the soft skills in practice management, its simplicity and complexity and also, its contributing factors, helps practitioners to understand the dynamic, social and complex contexts of practices. It is really helpful to all practitioners to grow their practices implementing soft skills.

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